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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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VOL.6 NO. 8
SECOND ISSUE OF
APRIL 1976
130

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5 Yrs Amtrak 5 Yrs

ON THE COVER:

Welcome to RTN's Fifth Anniversary of Amtrak issue. For our cover we selected this appealing, pastoral photo taken by Amtrak as a publicity shot shortly after delivery of the first Amfleet cars. Using Amtrak E unit no. 284 (former PC engine 4276) equipped with head-end electric power for heating and air conditioning of the Amfleet equipment, Amtrak posed the train on the Bowie branch of the Penn Central in Maryland, not far from Washington headquarters.

CARS & CONSISTS

*New F40PH diesels have been moving to the West Coast to be readied for hauling Amfleet equipment on corridor trains there. One such engine was moved West on the SUNSET LIMITED leaving New Orleans Apr 23: consist was engines 220 (F40), 571, 552; baggage 1164, hi-level coaches 9950, 9936, 9913, lounge 3395, diner 8031, sleepers 2732 "Pine Shore", 2366 "Regal Pass", 2603 "Pacific Bend", & 2351 "Regal Inn." The #220 came into New Orleans Apr 22 on the PANAMA LIMITED, behind engines 705 & 718. Another F40 ran on the SUNSET leaving May 5. At least two F40s were taken from Los Angeles to Seattle on the COAST STARLIGHT this month. And F40 #219 arrived in Seattle May 3 on the EMPIRE BUILDER, ahead of the two regular SDP40Fs.

*LONE STAR, train 16 May 1: engines 516, 518; baggage 1171, slpr 2726 "Pine Mesa", diner 8036, lounge 3382, hi-level coaches 9911, 9945.

*MOUNT RAINIER, train 797 at Seattle Apr 25 (1st 5:30pm departure) carried 900+ soccer fans to Portland after game in new Seattle "Kingdome" stadium adjoining station; return train Apr 26 (#796 PUGET SOUND) had this consist: engines 346, 340 (E units), 574; cars 6450, 7200, 6453, 8401, 9480, 4871, 9361 "Ocean View" Great Dome, 5236, 4861, 4826, 9472, 8351, 5691, 9455 "Silver Saddle", 5617, 5614.

*PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, train 794 at Seattle Apr 30--1st trip following 4-month suspension of service: engine 346; cars 5691, 8351, BN6402 (light load).

*AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN Extra 508 West at Kansas City Apr 28 (deadhead move of Amfleet cars to L.A.--see last issue p.3): engines 508 (SDP40F), 222, 215, 216, 217 (F40s); cars 21148, 20028, 21147, 20027, 21146, 21138, 21141, 21144, 21136, 21135, 21140, 20026, 21145, 21143, 21142, 21139, 20025, 21137. The 20000 series are Amcafe, 21100 series are Amcoach. One F40 was left in Barstow for signal installation.

*JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, train 51 at Alexandria Apr 22: engines 437, 401 (E8A, E9A); cars 1525, 2017 "Wren", 5054, 6052, 8332. Same, Washington Apr 24: engines 445, 402 (E units); cars Autoliner 101 (deadhead?), 1087 (mail), 1592, 2604 "Pacific Cape", 6030, 5241, 5649, 8332. Same, Apr 26: engines 400, 401 (E units); cars 1053, 1166, 2012 "Gull", 6070, 8111.

*More F40 movements: engine 216 powered the PUGET SOUND leaving Seattle May 6, with steam provided by a 1900-series heater car. Unit 218 arrived in Seattle May 6 at the head of the EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7, leading two SDP40Fs. Engine 219 powered the PUGET SOUND leaving Seattle May 7; rest of consist: heater car 1913, coach 6453, dome coach coffee shop 9800 "Silver Garden", coach 7200.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11 at Seattle May 7: engines 569, 533; cars 1034, 1502 "San Simeon", 4519, 4871, 4506, 4408, 4866, 3332, 8041, 2606 "Pacific Command", 2715 "Pine Crest", 4500, 4867 (7 coaches but no lunch counter car in post-Easter consist).

*MONTREALER, train 60 at Washington Apr 26: engine 953 (E60); cars 1512, 2773 "Norfolk", 2772 "Columbia", 8337, 3645 "Betsy Ross", 5641, 5260, 5242, 6008, ConRail 1522, ConRail 1572 (coach-lounge).

*BLUE RIDGE, train 701 at Washington Apr 26: engine 714 (P30); cars 21023, 21122, 21122, 20002 (Amcafe), 21065.

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FORD GOES TO AMTRAK FOR CAMPAIGN HELP--WILL HE HELP AMTRAK?

President Ford was planning a whistle-stop campaign tour in Michigan on May 15, Amtrak verified May 12. At the suggestion of Michigan Governor Milliken, Ford was planning a one-way trip between Flint and Niles, to stir up support in his home state for the May 18 primary election, which analysts say he must win in order to preserve his candidacy bid. The 7-hour long "Presidential Express" tour would see Ford riding in Amtrak inspection car 10,000--the former Autoliner car 1000, on an Amfleet-equipped train with steam for the observation car supplied by an E8 diesel unit, Amtrak #436. The 436 was being moved to Flint on May 12, at which time plans showed the rest of the consist to be: F40 engines 203 and 214, Amcafe 20029, Amcoach 21153, Amcafe 20030, Amcoach 21150, Amclub 20131, Amclub 20130, and the observation car. The Grand Trunk was to provide two pilot engines to precede the train on the closely-guarded route. The train was to deadhead back to Chicago the evening of May 15.

The whistle-stop campaign technique was used successfully by former President Harry Truman in the 1948 campaign. The present tour will be the first such to use modern Amfleet equipment. (One Amtrak person joked, off the record, that "maybe we should bring out some old P-70 coaches to show Ford the kinds of cars a lot of people have to ride in, and how much we could use more money.")

AMTRAK'S FUNDING BILL HEADING TOWARD WHITE HOUSE

Congress and the Senate, in respective committees, have both come up with bills that authorize $430 million for Amtrak funding for the fiscal year starting in October, an amount $52 million higher than the Ford administration asked for, but $30 million less than Amtrak had requested. The bills will go to the full House and Senate for further approval shortly, then to the White House for Ford's signature. The Wall Street Journal quoted an Amtrak spokesman as saying that the corporation would have to eliminate some planned new routes because of the cut in funds--the routes to include the Rock Island's Chicago-Rock Island line, and the DOT-mandated Washington to Denver run. The Journal reported that the House had additionally authorized $140 million for equipment purchases for the next two fiscal years, and $138 million for the two years to cover Colonial Corridor expenses arising from Amtrak's purchase of that line last month.

AMTRAK ANNOUNCES NEW TRAIN SERVICE TO VIRGINIA

A new train service, an extension of Amtrak's COLONIAL, was announced May 13. The new run, to begin June 15 (originally planned for next fall), will go from Washington to Newport News, VA via Richmond and Williamsburg, including a hoped-for bus transfer to Busch Gardens' "The Old Country" theme park near Williamsburg. The COLONIAL originates in Boston (Saturdays only), and other days is called the MOUNT VERNON, and runs New York to Washington. The new train will continue to do this, with the same departure times (12 noon from NY) and will be called the COLONIAL every day. It will leave Washington at 4:35pm, Williamsburg at 8:30pm, and reach Newport News at 9:10pm. Northbound it leaves Newport News at 2:50pm, Williamsburg 3:25pm, Washington at 7:30pm, and New York at 11:59pm. The train will be all Amfleet, including Amclub service. With the startup of the PALMETTO (see schedule last issue) also on June 15, Amtrak will run the two northbound trains as one train between Richmond VA and New York. Other station stops include Alexandria, Quantico and Fredericksburg (of these, only the first will be manned). The train will run on four separate railroads along its route: Amtrak New York-DC, RF&P to Richmond, SCL within Richmond, and the Chessie. The train will execute a 5-minute backup in a freight yard to transfer from the SCL to the Chessie (Amtrak emphasized that this is not an earlier-rumored long backup to Doswell). If Amtrak finds the train successful and decides to make it permanent, it will install new track to eliminate the backup movement. Sample fares are $12 Williamsburg-DC, $29.50 Williamsburg-NY. Amtrak checked timetables back to 1870 and could find no previous train that ran from the Northeast to Williamsburg & N. News without a change in Richmond. Trains 450-1, the RILEY connection to N. News, will be dropped June 15.

Rail Canada

PASSENGER TRAIN HEARINGS SHOW PUBLIC SUPPORT - RAILS LESS HOSTILE THAN EXPECTED

by Angus M. M. Dundee

As hearings on the future of Canadian passenger trains moved into their second month, public opinion, and some governmental opinion, seemed to be moving toward modernization and upgrading of the Dominion's passenger train service, and a consequent minimization of discontinuances. The railways themselves have refrained from presenting plans either for development or curtailment of service until a later date.

At an Ottawa hearing, J. H. Morish, marketing VP for CP Rail, said CP will be willing to provide improved passenger service, provided there is proper compensation from the federal government. He refused to be pinned down, under questioning, to a definition of "adequate compensation." CP has suggested that it wants more than straight compensation for losses for providing service, and will offer as much cooperation as possible for eliminating duplicate facilities.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Transport Commission, conducting the cross-country schedule of hearings, announced that a "massive marketing survey" to determine "what kind of transcontinental service Canadians wish" will be undertaken soon. David Jones, of CRT's railway committee, said findings should be announced on June 26, and would be followed by introduction of a preferred plan for redesigned service that will meet government objectives.

The Canadian Railway Labour Association, however, urged in a brief to the CTC that CTC disregard the orders of Transport Minister Otto Lang to undertake hearings and plan-evaluation, on the grounds that the government had been responsible, along with the railways, for making passenger services unattractive. The CRLA also accused the government of favoritism to air service.

An Ottawa group called Transport 2000 presented a brief to CTC staff suggesting that government budget cuts should be made in air services. Under the proposal, air service would be curtailed in Canada to reduce an annual $200 million deficit; and airports and associated installations would be transferred to a Crown Corporation, charged with profit-making. The group said air travelers are wealthier than rail travelers. The group will launch a nationwide membership drive soon, principally to back development of better rail service.

Hearings in Toronto provided a wide range of backing for continued services, with attacks on both the government and the railways. Witnesses complained of deteriorating service. Terry Fox of Toronto, who travels over 10,000 miles per year by train, scored "outrages of government" and the "indifference" and "downright hostility" of the railways. Many witnesses claimed continued dining car and sleeping car operations are "imperative."

The Manitoba government announced briefs will be filed opposing reductions on transcontinental runs. Industries Minister Leonard Evans said the Manitoba NDP government might support reduced transcon service if intercity runs in the Prairie provinces were upgraded. The stand is somewhat opposite of that taken by Alberta, where Progressive Conservative ministers have indicated that transcon runs must be preserved, while suggesting that Alberta's RDC runs might be discontinued instead--including the Edmonton-Calgary runs, often discussed as candidates for corridor-type operation.

The Manitoba minister also injected upcoming branch-line abandonment proposals into the issues, calling branch curtailment "agonizing self-mutilation" by the railways, in a possible harbinger of politics to come in the Prairie provinces.

At Thunder Bay, Harry Smyth, speaking for the United Transportation Union, evoked memories of the CP's DOMINION, discontinued in 1966, on the CP pretext that the locomotives were needed for freight service--thus reopening a touchy issue for CP Rail.

CP spokesmen said that CP Rail had lost $111 million on its CANADIAN service in the past five years. Adding CN's losses on transcon service raises the deficit to $312 million, or $79 per passenger, and $13.51 for every inhabitant of Canada for that 5-year span. He did not discuss auto or airplane costs for a similar period.

Garth Campbell, CN's passenger VP, and principal architect of the CN passenger revival in the 1960s, told CTC officials that development of a single, basic passenger network was a problem for which there was "no simple solution." Campbell said no CN plan will be announced until the series of hearings is completed. Campbell said 90% of passengers on CN's SUPER CONTINENTAL are "long haul," but the train also provides short haul services to isolated communities, such as in Northern Ontario.

CANADIAN NATIONAL'S TURBOTRAIN, in a guarded test, reached speeds of 140 mph near Morrisburg, Ont. Apr 22. The flashy speedster thus bettered the 129 mph run set by CP Rail in tests of the LRC train in February. About 100 members of the press were aboard the run, which operated on a 20-mile segment of the Montreal-Toronto main line considered in excellent condition. Normal Turbo top speeds are 95 mph. Screens gave instant speed readings to press members, who cheered ever more loudly until the 140.6 mph mark was reached. The Turbo used was painted in CN's new blue-&-gold colours--a colour scheme which eliminates one of the train's most prominent signatures: the red "nose" of the clamshell doors, which open to allow MU operation.

THE FINANCIAL POST reports (May 1) that CN will shortly call for bids on 60 to 80 passenger train units (enough to make 4 to 12 complete trainsets), with the contract likely to go to one of these three: Pratt & Whitney for the Turbo Phase Two; Bombardier-MLW for its LRC train; or Hawker Siddeley for the Futura train. About $50 million will be spent as a federal government demonstration project to acquire the new lightweight trainsets.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES start in Montreal July 17. Despite the attraction of these, and a heavy tourism year expected, Canadian National, for the first time in many years, will operate only one transcontinental train this summer. The SUPER CONTINENTAL, still on a long, 4-nights-out schedule, will operate in only one section. Train 3-4, the former Vancouver-Toronto section, has been relegated to limbo, insuring increasing difficulty in obtaining reservations for thru patrons. In the Maritimes, once again no CHALEUR train will be operated to Gaspe. As in 1975, the eastbound Gaspe cars will operate in the SCOTIAN from Montreal; and westbound in the OCEAN.

Observers feel that CN is now making a full attempt to shift as much transcon patronage as possible to CP Rail, apparently now the "preferred" route for a surviving transcon service. The slow SUPER schedule also defines clearly Ottawa's ability to manage the government-owned CN system, and may in effect be accelerating moves in other areas to form an independent passenger corporation modeled after Amtrak.

The slowing of the SUPER schedule over the years is evident from these comparison figures: westbound, Oct 1965, Apr 1967, Apr 1976 respectively: 68'30", 69'20", 86'10". Eastbound (as above): 69'30", 71'00", 82'30". The schedule is now 2/3 of a day slower than CP Rail's CANADIAN, altho CN has the advantage of an easier crossing of the Rockies, a time advantage by avoiding Thunder Bay on a more direct route across Northern Ontario. CN mileage Montreal-Vancouver is only 34 miles longer than CP. The SUPER also suffers from greatly lengthened station stops. The westbound stop at Winnipeg, a 30-40min stop in previous years, is a full 2 hours in the summer schedule! The new westbound schedule breaks a connection with the southbound Amtrak PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL at New Westminster, B.C., now arriving 33mins after the PI's departure.

In contrast to CN, CP Rail's 1976 summer schedule offers few changes. There is no change in running time of the CANADIAN, proving that despite increased freight traffic, schedule times introducedin the 1950s can be maintained. At Montreal, train 42 the former ATLANTIC LTD, is advanced 1hr 50min eastbound to miss the connection with the eastbound CANADIAN, a patronage-discouraging move CP has made for several summer seasons.

AMTRAK AT AGE FIVE

by James Russell

ntrak celebrated its fifth anniversary on May 1. Five years ago, on May 1, 1971, the corporation took over operation of most of the country's passenger trains, running a pared-down system of politically-drawn routes that connected a number of "end points" (whatever they are) around the U.S.

Most RTN readers are familiar with the history of Amtrak and know of the many changes the corporation has made in U.S. passenger train service--the ordering and introduction of new equipment, adoption of a nationwide computerized reservations system, introduction of additional routes, gradual acquisition of its own physical plant and employees, etc. Rather than review these events again, we want to take this opportunity to try our own assessment of what has happened in the public's relationship with trains in the past five years, what it was and is that changes people's opinions of train travel, and what the future may hold in store.

trying to phase out the trains

If our coverage of Amtrak sometimes seemed overly critical and harsh during the past years, recent facts that have come to light make it appear too sympathetic, if anything, in the first few years of Amtrak's existence. Washington Star transportation writer Steve Aug recently won a court order releasing to him the minutes of the meetings of Amtrak's Board of Directors, under the Freedom of Information act. On May 7, 1976 he published some of the information he gleaned from these, including one attention-riveting item: it happened that on May 14, 1971, at the third meeting of Amtrak's Board, that Chairman Roger Lewis attempted to convince the Directors that the function of Amtrak was to be only a temporary corporation, and thus it should not purchase any railroad cars, but only lease them from the railroads. Apparently Lewis was convinced that Amtrak was not here to stay, and that his job was to preside over an orderly phasing out of passenger trains in America. Fortunately, the Board rejected this view; however, how pervasive was the phasing-out notion within the early rail corporation?

This year, finally, after five long years, we begin to see Amtrak really trying to come into its own. The purchase of the Colonial Corridor was a big shot in the arm for Amtrak. The arrival of new equipment in appreciable quantities finally makes it possible for Amtrak to initiate new rail services proudly, without having to keep its fingers crossed that the cars won't break down before the initial publicity run is halfway thru. The initiation of thru New York-Newport News service next month is viewed by Amtrak as the first time it's been able to experiment with a new service on its own, without some legislation forcing it to start up a new run. On our visit to Washington in March, we were struck by the importance to Amtrak people of this sense of self-direction. It's only natural, of course, and must be very important to Amtrak's morale. One of the mandates that Amtrak was given when it was formally set up was to be experimental, to run the trains like an aggressive, creative business would--searching for new markets, trying novel techniques, making improvements to attract new people to the rails. If you or we were at Amtrak, this is what we'd want to jump into immediately. It must have been very frustrating for

Amtrak people to wait so many years before having enough resources to begin doing this on any sizable scale.

years wasted

Political analysts tell us that it's popular to be anti-Washington these days. That's not the people's fault--Washington is only getting what it deserves. In the area of transportation, for example, Washington seems to have demonstrated total incompetence. It's likely that the nation will never recover completely from the failure to make a substantial investment in passenger trains back in 1971. Only two years later, the nation was stunned by an Arab oil embargo that sent people onto the rails in droves, only to find that train equipment was scarce, antiquated, overcrowded and failure-prone. How many people were turned off by that experience will never be known. If the nation had invested in new passenger cars immediately in 1971, we'd be in much better shape now. Now, almost three years after the energy crisis, we're still unprepared, and automobile travel has resumed its upward climb. Remember all the calls for train service from every corner of the nation after the oil embargo? Nearly all of them went unanswered because of the "equipment shortage." That shortage was manufactured by Washington's failure to realize the folly of starting up a nationwide passenger train system with only old equipment.

As an example of the extreme lack of foresight of the planners of the original Amtrak system, consider the fact that a north-south West Coast route wasn't even included in the original plan. Now the train that runs on that route serves more passengers than any other in the Amtrak system. Couldn't someone have predicted that? How could a train that connects nearly all the major cities on the Coast ever have failed? Score zero for planning ability of some Washington transportation experts.

Now let us go a little beyond the above statements. You know that we weren't being totally honest when we wrote the above. You know that the real answer is that they could have made the prediction, but they weren't trying to devise a rational, predictable system. Their hands were tied by political strings. They omitted the COAST STARLIGHT and SUNSET LIMITED routes because they wanted to minimize the number of trains on Southern Pacific routes. They included them only because there was enough public outcry.

how Washington functions

There are basically two ways of establishing a law or policy in the U.S. One is to have a large number of people vocally supporting it. Two (and usually more effective than the first) is to have a few people with a lot of money supporting it. Thus national policies are so frequently set by a few people who are leaders of large corporations, or large government bureaucracies, or privately-owned lucrative

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT TO READERS

RTN is changing the cover date of its issues, beginning next issue. In order to be better in accord with reality, we will call the next issue (due out the end of May, but to be mailed June 1 because of the Memorial Day holiday) the First June issue. There will be no issues dated May this year. Our normal schedule calls for the 1st issue of a month to appear in mid-month, and the 2nd issue at the month-end. We are now 2 weeks behind schedule (one week due to the flu epidemic, one week due to our trip to Washington in March), and the next issue would be the 1st May issue, but it would appear in June; thus the need for the change. Issue numbering will continue as usual, and every subscriber will automatically receive the same number of issues for which he or she subscribed. We hope this change will not be too confusing.

businesses. The problem with this is that the policies so frequently tend to preserve the money and/or the power of their organization at the expense of large numbers of individuals who have had no say in the matter.

It's not easy to involve large numbers of individuals in a particular cause. It's easy for a corporate chairman to influence decisions, however, since his advisers decide what decision will maximize the corporation's power, and the chairman need only issue an order to pursue that goal, which is followed machine-like with all the monetary power of the corporation. A corporation is a lot of power held by too few people, without the incentive to apply the power for the general welfare.

back on the track

If these comments seem too tangential to the question of U.S. train service, let us state that they're not. It was certain economic requirements of corporations that led to the deterioration of passenger trains in the 1960s. It was the influence of the corporate mentality that was responsible for the meager attempt to rebuild service in 1971--actually viewed by many as the orderly phasing out of train service. It is corporate power and corporate restraints that determine the present form of our inadequate and precariously balanced transportation system.

The history of transportation shows us how the corporate buildup of the big oil companies so negatively affected the way we travel and the untoward side effects such as pollution, that we now suffer. At one time in automotive history the gas-burning internal combustion engine was only one of three major competing engine types. The steam car and the electric car were to be found on our streets in goodly numbers--no doubt running along much more quietly and smoothly and with much less environmental pollution than their gas-belching competitors. The gasoline car came to dominate the streets for a number of reasons, including slow technological advance in electric and steam power. We took the "easy" way out, following the path of big profits in oil, failing to predict the dire consequences that would follow.

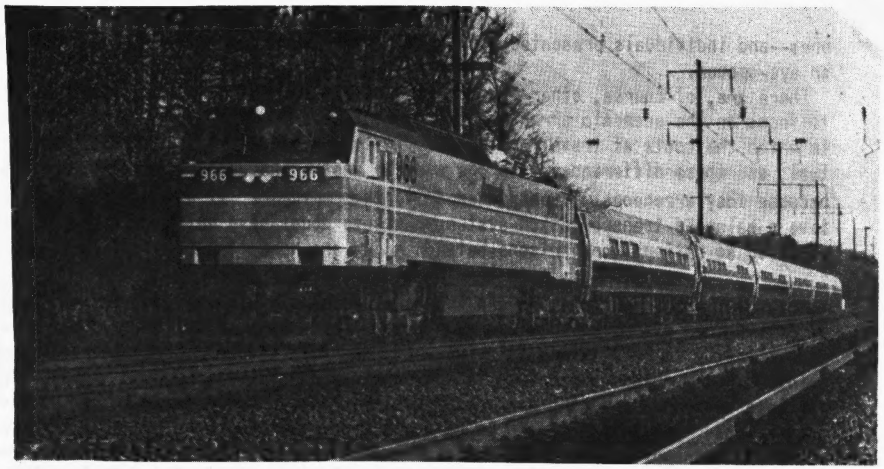
A similar path is being followed now, with big energy interests pushing us into nuclear power, when any statistician could predict--not the precise date, but the inevitable chances of atomic radiation disasters. Because the Atomic Energy Commission gained the upper hand when it was heavily funded to build the nuclear bomb, it has been able to manipulate the course of research and development for future power needs. This is an example of a bureaucracy, a node of power, leading us into decisions based not on rationality but on existing power. We should be actively developing other power sources, such as solar power, rather than turning away toward an "easy" solution, the way we discarded the good steam car and electric car options.

how much petroleum is left?

Estimates differ widely on the amount of oil remaining in the world. The most optimistic are in the range of 50-60 years. At the other end, one estimate gives us only 12-15 years before oil runs out. And one can imagine that competition for the remaining oil will become fierce as the end draws close. We don't know what most trains will be using for fuel in the coming decades, but one would certainly expect a shift to electricity, with energy from stationary plants driven by various means.

It looks as if we'd better be making some good decisions pretty soon. For example, what will happen to the automobile? We've talked with some people recently who could be called average, uninformed citizens with regard to energy and transportation (non-RTN readers), and we were amazed at their ignorance in these matters. They actually thought that some day soon we could have individual nuclear power plants under the hoods of our cars! With such misinformation rife in the population, it's no wonder a Washington official within the last week could use the scare threat of another Arab oil embargo as a motive for supporting nuclear power plant development!

These same good but ill-informed people were nostalgic and enthusiastic about the train. They liked to ride trains (hadn't done it in a long time) but found it inconvenient (or so they thought) not to have their car at their destination. They thought we needed more car-carrying trains ("Don't they have a lot of them in Canada?"). They agreed with us that an overnight train from here to L.A. would be



Amtrak's latest to lure riders from their automobiles--Amfleet equipment behind a new GE electric engine, in a publicity photo released recently by Amtrak.

dandy. But we're afraid we almost blew up at them when they added: "But of course there's so much competition from the airlines."

"No!" we shouted. "The trains are not trying to compete with the airlines! Ninety-five per cent of intercity travel is by automobile. All you have to do is shift some of that auto travel to rail, and the trains will have plenty of business."

"All" is such an easy word to use. Shifting people from one mode to another isn't easy. But then it's easier when you have an economic--or an apparent economic advantage. The automobile has an apparent economic advantage, and if the illusion were dissolved, lots of people would switch. The nice thing is that you don't even have to make people leave their cars involuntarily. If only those people who hate driving (the closet auto-phobes?) were given an economic incentive to switch, there would be plenty of new train riders. But the illusion prevails that the car is cheaper and more convenient. If you had to call your travel agent before taking an automobile trip; if you had to have the cost of the trip spelled out in advance and the check written or credit card slip signed; if you had to put money in a meter inside your car door (and have the exact change!), then you wouldn't use your car so often. Most of the myriad costs of automobiles are hidden, and payable in easy installments. Not so with trains. You have to face up to the total monetary costs of your trip before you leave. With a car you don't even have to buy gasoline. You can pile into the car at any hour of day or night and fantasize that you'll get a long way on the somewhat unknown amount of gas in your tank before you stop at a convenient station and pull out your credit card.

The car may not be as comfortable or offer so many more opportunities for living like a human being, but it does seem convenient. At least it's convenient until the inconvenience of the day of reckoning when people are faced with the problems of noise, congesion, pollution... you know them all. If only cars didn't have such an illusion of economic and physical ease about them. Various economists have shown that cars are far more expensive to operate and maintain than people think. Unfortunately for trains, their costs are so visible. The indirect subsidies that keep cars, buses and planes running are usually well-hidden.

the forgotten individual

One problem is that the individual has been forgotten. No one bothers to tell him how much he spends on transportation each year. If the actual costs of each mode could be tallied up--all the indirect and hidden costs, along with the obvious

ones--and individuals presented with such a tally sheet periodically, it would be an eye-opener.

There are, of course, other factors that determine choice of mode, but we wanted to focus on the economic arrangements, since they are poorly understood. The ways in which the costs of travel are tallied in the different modes is largely artifactual, and these differences give one mode or another advantages over other modes, because they erroneously appear cheaper to the consumer. It will be hard to achieve a balanced transportation system when some modes have unfair advantages such as this, so rational comparisons between modes are hard to make.

increasing train travel

Balancing our transportation can be described simply without too much distortion: decreasing our overdependence upon the auto. That means shifting travel to other modes (mostly to rail, since it's the most under-utilized, from a rational standpoint). Not everyone subscribes to this obvious conclusion, however; some DOT people have spoken of reducing Americans' mobility altogether--trying to get people to travel less. This doesn't seem to us a wise goal. Since there are so many people who would be happy to travel by train more and car less, if it made sense to them (mostly economic sense), it seems only reasonable to concentrate on that market first.

Amtrak does understand that the car user is the person to woo. Many people in transportation didn't understand this until quite recently, and some still don't. The private railroads always blamed loss of passengers on the airlines, when it was really the freeway. They seemed never to have done a serious marketing study of the situation. That Amtrak does now understand this is exemplified by remarks of President Paul Reistrup in announcing the forthcoming New York-Newport News service. He urged New Yorkers to "leave their cars home", avoid toll highways and other discomforts, and ride a "new, comfortable train." On other occasions, too, Mr. Reistrup has made clear the market that Amtrak is aiming for. (Actually, it's the same market that all professional carriers have to aim for, tho one wonders if the bus people know it, with their exaggerated concern over train-bus competition.)

what's happened to trains

From the standpoint of the consumer's perception of rail travel, what changes have occurred in the last five years? We believe that things have markedly improved. Despite some ups and downs in places, train travel now seems much more generally accepted as a normal mode of travel (despite Secretary Coleman's remarks). One need no longer feel like some sort of kook for choosing an unpopular mode. The coming of Amtrak has made train usage a normal choice again.

Out on the rails, one feels more secure than before Amtrak. You no longer feel at the mercy of some belligerent railway that is hostile to passenger service. You know that it's Amtrak's policy to look after your welfare and see you to your destination. You know that a complaint to the proper authority will really have some effect. (What good did it do to complain to the ICC or the SP before 1971? Parenthetically, this probably explains why Amtrak had such a barrage of complaints after its formation--at last rail travelers had someone who was supposed to listen.) The centralization of passenger train services in itself had a salutary effect upon rail travel; better connections and reservations procedures, and concentration of information and responsibility in one company, tho often spotty, was a great improvement over the pre-Amtrak situation.

Not all problems have been solved, by any means. There will always be problems as long as there are people. But the rail traveler these days can be optimistic. Things have been improving, and the prospect is that they will improve at an even faster rate now that the effects of Amtrak's capital expenditures are starting to be seen--new equipment, better stations, improved track. Once these improvements become really obvious, Amtrak will be able to become more expansive in promotion of its service, and the move to rails should really get into high gear.

Remember the POTOMAC TURBO debacle when Amtrak was about half a year old? The placement of the Turbo-Train on the Washington to Parkersburg line to mollify Congressman Harley Staggers subjected Amtrak to a barrage of criticism and to charges of blatant politics, while Amtrak insisted the move was an "experiment". The experiment was soon terminated.

Much of what happens in transportation depends upon events in the energy arena, which are not totally predictable at this time. It seems likely to us that after the November elections, when more politically unpopular things can be done, all hell will be free to break loose with regard to fuel usage. Gasoline usage is climbing rapidly again (in February Californians used more gas than any previous February) and sales of big cars are booming, higher than Detroit's expectations. Washington has been marking time in this election year, while the people have forgotten, apparently, about the energy crisis. Washington will feel constrained to do something about saving fuel, while trying to avoid another recession like the one that accompanied the oil embargo in 1973. There could be another surge of people to the rails, and maybe this time Amtrak will be prepared for them.

Nobody wants to give up automobiles altogether. While we've been one of their severest critics, we like them as much as anyone. Maybe the future will see people continuing to buy cars, but using them less. Using them less voluntarily, we hope. Using rails more because rail travel has become attractive to them.

LATE NEWS

THE PRESIDENTIAL EXPRESS of May 15 saw Grand Trunk bicentennial engine 1776 at the head, followed by two Amtrak F40s and an E8 for steam (see p.3). A station wagon fitted with rail wheels, carrying Secret Service men, preceded the train by 45mins. Then two locomotives 15mins ahead provided a pilot train. The Express was followed by one loco and caboose as a "sweep train." The official railroad term for a presidential train is "POTUS" (President Of The United States)..... CANDIDATE JIMMY CARTER rode a Metroliner Baltimore to Washington the morning of May 17..... THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION of Women rode a special Amfleet train NY-Chicago, leaving May 14, then buses to Springfield IL for a lobbying effort. Train returned to NY leaving Chicago May 16. The long Amfleet train carried 800-900 passengers..... A FARE INCREASE for coach travel on some routes effective June 15 was announced by Amtrak May 14. Fares will go up 5% on many trains, with the exception of most Midwestern trains, Midwestern and Western corridor runs, and the COAST STARLIGHT. Slumbercoach space charges will rise 10%. Metroliners are not affected..... BLUE WATER LIMITED will get Turboliner equipment on May 20..... TWO AUTO-TRAIN derailments this year (Mar 7 & May 5) were caused by cracked wheels, said the National Transportation Safety Board. Auto-Train is taking extra precautions to examine the wheels of its auto carriers now, and has begun running the auto carriers as a separate train. The corporation discontinued its Louisville runs until June as a result of equipment shortages stemming from the derailments. Auto-Train will report record profits in its fiscal year ended Apr 30.....

On First Viewing the L.A. Amfleet

A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN'S IMPRESSIONS OF AMTRAK'S ANNIVERSARY DISPLAY

by Mark Johnston

Photos by Paul Rayton.

On May 1 Amtrak exhibited five new Amfleet cars and an F40PH diesel at Los Angeles Union station preparatory to placing them on the SAN DIEGAN runs. At the gates an Amtrak man was passing out hats, buttons, pamphlets and plastic Amtrak bags. He said the turnout so far was good, considering that Amtrak had no money to advertise the exhibit.

I walked down the long, airport-type tunnel to the tracks. Already I could hear the drone of the idling engine. Up the ramp and there it was--F40PH #215, along with Amcoach 21146, Amcafe 20027, Amcoach 21147, Amcafe 20028, Amcoach 21148, and baggage car 1376 (Ambag?) rigged for dual use of steam and electric power. My first remark was on the low height of the cars above the tracks, the new trucks, and the lack of auxiliary equipment below the cars. The only sound one could hear, besides the engine, was the quiet buzz of the air conditioning system.

I climbed aboard from the heat and smog of the afternoon to the quiet cool of a coach. The car had a light purple and orange/brown color scheme which was very pleasing to the eye. The ample space for baggage and the tables are very good features, I felt, and the long glass-and-Lexan windows, which were eye-level when you sat down, were better than the standard square window. Maybe the windows will do better out West than in the corridor back East.

Next came the Amcafe, which was already partly set up with microwave oven, soft drink dispensers and warming ovens. One problem, tho--water was leaking from under a cabinet, much to the frustration of an Amtrak man who was trying to stop it.

I walked thru the rest of the train and observed a number of people discussing how much better the train should be. In the last coach, two of the 84 seats had been removed to reveal the tracks on which the seats can be moved back and forth. An Amtrak man was demonstrating how the cars can be altered.

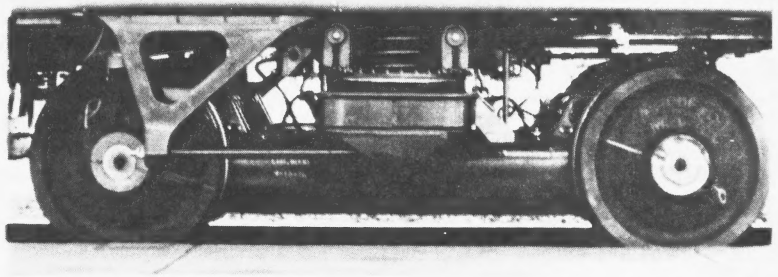
I got off and examined the baggage car and its new electrical connections for the Amfleet cars. It occurred to me that there must be more of these cars on the Chicago-St. Louis Amfleet trains. The Amtrak man said this was a good quick way to provide baggage service on the SAN DIEGANS where, unlike other Amfleet runs, it is needed.

The band was playing "I've Been Working on the Railroad." I looked around the rest of the station. SDP40Fs 508, 512, and 506 were idling on track 6, waiting for their departure on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, and on track 7 two baggage cars for New York were being loaded with mail for the same train.

Then at 3:45 the SAN DIEGAN pulled in with the handsome E units 417 and 451, plus baggage 1164, coach 5226, lounge 3821, and coaches 5528, 5230, 6033, and 7515. With cameras, people came from around the station to photograph these fine engines. Cameras clicked and people talked about the engines and their future--an unknown future for these two Es and companions 416 and 450 when the F40s take over shortly.

It was an interesting comparison on those two tracks--Amtrak's past and present on one, in the form of the SAN DIEGAN's conventional cars and Es, and the F40s and Amfleet on the other. There is no doubt that Amtrak is going bold, new and modern in a move to draw passengers--and let's hope it pays off.

Photo at left: Amtrak F40 diesel no. 215 on display at Los Angeles on May 1, with Amfleet cars behind. On this page: Details of Amfleet cars from the exhibit. page 13



ABOARD THE AMERICAN EAGLE SPECIAL

by James Hal Selzer, Jr.

On April 6 Illinois Central Gulf operated the "American Eagle Industrial Special" from New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal to Baton Rouge, LA. On this occasion ICG was formally donating its refurbished Baton Rouge depot to the city as an elegant addition to the Louisiana Arts and Science Center.

The train had two GP 38s up front. The lead unit was ICG's 1776 "American Eagle" followed by ICG 9615 "John A. Logan." Amtrak provided five of the six passenger cars. The car consist was: coaches 5414, 5618, observation lounge 3339, coaches 7258, 6045, and ICG office car #1. ICG hi-railers ran ahead, reviving memories of the Florida East Coast Railway's last passenger train operations. A spare set of engines followed us from Mays Yard to Baton Rouge.

The trip offered me my first ride over the now freight-only Yazoo & Mississippi Valley trackage, running from Kenner, LA (Orleans Jct.) to Baton Rouge.

While a jazz band blasted Dixieland favorites, our train departed NOUPT at 9:30 am, following the route of Amtrak's PANAMA LIMITED to Kenner. Once we arrived at Orleans Jct., our train proceeded briefly onto the KCS, and then to the Y&MV or "Valley Line" as local railroaders call it. At Kenner, the first of seven whistle stops, three bus loads of passengers from Baton Rouge came aboard. At New Sarpy we rolled in early--too early--and had to wait for our official crowd to arrive.

At each stop bands played, crowds cheered, and local politicians spoke. All the official action took place on ICG #1. Local dignitaries were introduced by Lieutenant Governor James Fitzmorris or Louisiana Public Service Commission Chairman Louis Lambert, who served as honorary conductor and flagman, respectively. All the speeches were presented in the traditional manner from the rear platform. All cars were equipped with an excellent P.A. system so that only the engine crews were spared the speeches. A big advantage to the P.A., however, was the running narrative that accompanied the tour.

ICG went all out to make the Special a big success. Box lunches were provided, of ham and cheese, piled thick on fresh French bread; fresh fruit; cookies, and absolutely all the Pepsi, Bubble-Up, and Dad's Root Beer one could consume.

Our train proceeded thru the entire petrochemical complex to just beyond the KCS bridge at North Baton Rouge. There our power was cut off and a yard job using ICG 7738 towed us three miles south to the Y&MV depot. At 2:22pm we detrained for the formal dedication. By 4pm those of us returning to New Orleans were aboard Gulf Transport buses for the 1 hour, 20 min ride home.

Altho all equipment was refurbished, but not nearly the best Amtrak has to offer, it elicited many favorable comments by the industrialists and politicians. The cars were clean, but some windows were fogged up. Luckily, enough seats by good windows were available. When future consideration of a 403-B contract for New Orleans-Baton Rouge service becomes serious, it may be desirable to use the KCS mainline because ICG's route is choked with industry, and the KCS routing is not only 10 miles shorter, but also straighter. In the SOUTHERN BELLE's last days, a running time of 2 hrs, 20min with two conditional stops was attained. With up-graded track, new equipment, and some fast running (Seaboard style), perhaps express bus time could be matched or beaten.

The emotional zenith of the day came for me at 2:45pm. The entire party was up on the glass-enclosed second level of the Arts and Science Center. Flash bulbs flared, news cameras whirred; Alan Boyd of ICG was giving us the depot and a little speech. Visible on the tracks below were an ex-NH coach and ex-FEC lounge--part of our Special being switched for exhibit with the "American Eagle" by an ex-Frisco geep--all of this on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in southern Louisiana. A rail fan's delight. By day's end, reflecting on my travels with the "American Eagle," I recalled with appreciation an ancient quote from Joachin du Bellay--"Happy the man who like Ulysses has had a pleasant voyage."

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT from Amtrak of the placement of Amfleet equipment on the Chicago-Detroit route came May 12. The new cars will be phased in beginning May 18. Train 350 will be first to use them that day, with the first return trip from Detroit to Chicago the same day on train 355. On May 19, a second Amfleet set is to run on train 354, and on train 351 the following day. The train names SAINT CLAIR and WOLVERINE are being revived for the morning and afternoon trains respectively; they were dropped when Turboliner service began. Amtrak said the Turbos were being removed because their limited seating, and inflexibility of the bi-directional trainsets, could not handle all the traffic on the line, including further expected increases. At a date to be announced later, the Turbos, after going thru the shops, will be placed on the Chicago-Port Huron run and on the Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha Service--4 per day and 5 on Sunday on the latter line. An Amtrak spokesman told RTN that the move of Turbos to the Hiawatha Service was the first example of a major service modification being planned by a regional office and decided locally before Washington headquarters knew about it. Decentralization is beginning to function..... WITH THE SUMMER schedule changes on June 15, almost every long distance train running on ConRail lines will have intermediate schedule changes (tho not endpoint changes) because of beginning track improvement work under the new ConRail regime. ConRail is said to have hired over 100 people in Toledo for track improvement. On the NATIONAL LIMITED route between Terre Haute and St. Louis, for example, a large amount of welded rail is to be laid..... AMTRAK DID ISSUE a nationwide timetable dated Apr 25, contrary to our report last issue. The red-white-and-blue schedule, when folded, looks similar to the regional versions (see last issue). Our rear cover this issue is a reprint of an ad from the new timetable. And Amtrak announced that their Apr 25 schedules show the Chicago-Champaign-Urbana ILLINI arriving Champaign at 7:30pm, when the correct arrival time is 7pm.....

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THOSE CRAZY PEOPLE: not all the abnormal people are riding trains between Boston and New York. The Wall Street Journal reports (May 14) that two officials at the DOT are "in a state of total paranoia" at the possibility of losing their jobs soon..... RAIL SUPPORTERS INTERESTED in bringing back the San Francisco-Monterey DEL MONTE will be meeting again on May 26 at Quail Lodge in Carmel Valley. The group, led by Ed Haber of Carmel Valley, met on Apr 28 and were given official figures worked up by Amtrak and CalTrans. They estimated that yearly costs would be about $47,000 to each of the five counties served, tho higher the first year because of $500,000 of track work. This assumes a daily ridership of 150 (not all riding the complete run). A preliminary schedule has the train leaving S.F. at 4pm for a 2½-hr run. Return is 7:45am from Monterey. A connecting shuttle train would run Watsonville-Santa Cruz. Haber thinks the revived service can be operating by the end of this year.....

MORE TRACK UPGRADING work will be done on the Chicago-Detroit line. Amtrak's Board of Directors at its Apr 21 meeting approved spending $2.7 million on it, contingent upon supplementary funds from the State of Michigan. Most of the work will be between Kalamazoo and Michigan City, Indiana. A later stage of track improvement is plannedto bring train speeds from 60 up to 79mph and cut 10 min from the Chicago to Detroit trip time..... DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: the weight of GM's proposed AMT-125 is 115 tons, not 115 pounds as we stated last issue..... THE DENVER ZEPHYR consist, to be seen by travelers in Kansas City, and owned by a K.C. banker, has been sold to the government of Saudi Arabia. The NEBRASKA ZEPHYR, long stored in Denver, is owned by the same banker and is at last report also in Kansas City alongside the streamlined DZ..... THREE "F" UNITS, nos. 110, 118, and 120, suddenly appeared in the BN yard in Chicago this month..... AMTRAK WAS PLANNING a shakedown run of the new Amfleet cars on the SAN DIEGAN line, moving the cars to San Diego on train 772

on May 11 for a short display in San Diego, and bringing them back to L.A. the same day on train 775. The cars were reported to be deadheading..... YOU'VE HEARD OF Murder on the Orient Express. Now Amtrak's COAST STARLIGHT joins the ranks of trains of mystery and intrigue. On May 4 a Los Angeles woman was the victim of an attempted murder in the lounge car of the northbound train not far south of San Luis Obispo. The victim and a suspect, 38-year old Ronald Brown of L.A. were both removed at San Luis. Mrs. Kathleen Wayne, 72, was reported in serious condition...

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INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION this month issued new rules for passenger trains, to take effect June 9--the outcome of their recent investigation of train service. The new regulations ban smoking in dining cars, require carriers to give passengers a summary of their rights under the new rules, require carriers to provide alternate transportation if railroad car temperatures go above 80° or below 60°, require the availability of sleeping cars on night runs of 6 or more hours, and tighten standards of on-time performance and station cleanliness and security..... ANOTHER ICC RULING this month rejected a plan by Rock Island to merge into the Missouri Pacific, while approving the merger of the Texas & Pacific and the Chicago & Eastern Illinois into the parent company MoPac..... A SUMMARY OF the Carnegie-Mellon Conference on Improved Passenger Train Service (see brief summary in our 1st Dec 1975 issue) is now available at $15 postpaid (300 pages) from: Transportation Research Institute, Carnegie-Mellon University, Schenley Park, Pittsburgh PA 15213..... AMTRAK NOW RUNS a free bus connection to and from the COAST STARLIGHT between Sacramento and Davis, CA. It's already averaging over five passengers per bus..... APRIL RIDERSHIP FIGURES won't be out for awhile yet, but some preliminary ones are available for the SAN DIEGAN; it increased 44.8% above April 1975, with a total of 38,175 passengers for the three trains..... A FREIGHT DERAILMENT at Northwood, OH (Toledo) on May 10 forced Amtrak train 49, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, to detour from Cleveland to Crestline and over the ex-PRR route into Chicago..... THE SOUTH SHORE Railroad (See also Urban-Suburban Transit, p. 19) this month asked Amtrak to take over its operations, in a search for some agency to fund purchase of new cars.....

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FERROCARRIL DEL PACIFICO has announced in some U.S. newspapers schedule changes in its train #2 at Nogales. The southbound train will leave (starting June 1) at 4pm instead of 5pm. The train includes sleepers, club car and diner. Address of the traffic department is Guadalajara, Jalisco, Tolsa #336, Mexico..... THE ILLINOIS ZEPHYR got Amcoaches for the first time on May 6, replacing the bi-level ex-commuter cars. Consist was P30 #717, 3 Amcoaches and an Amcafe..... GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, Congress's auditing agency said on Apr 29 that it had calculated that Amtrak will need twice the amount of money the corporation has estimated for the next five years--$6.2 billion, as opposed to $3 billion..... ROCK ISLAND LINES got approval from Transportation Secretary Coleman on Apr 28 of $17.5 million in federal loan guarantees..... A DRAMATIC DEMONSTRATION of the toughness of what apparently was Lexan was shown in news photos this month of an employee firing a stream of 45-caliber rifle bullets at the window of a truck while the president of Armored Vehicle Builders calmly sat inside. The weapon was fired from 30 feet away in a demonstration in Pittsfield, MA..... THE ASSOCIATED PRESS'S Anniversary summary of Amtrak's first five years wasn't very flattering, at least in the first few paragraphs, and in fact was rather dumb. It began by saying that Amtrak "ended its first five years of operation... without a single route showing a profit". Please refer to our own essay on economic manipulation and Amtrak's first 5 years starting on p. 6. The way the transportation field is organized, it just doesn't make any sense to talk about profitability, and AP's writers should go back to school and bone up on these fine points..... REMEMBER THE TRANSBUS? Former Secretary Brinegar wanted the nation to come up with a "lovable bus." The DOT funded a project for competing firms to design an advanced bus. Reports Jack Anderson (May 4): a Stanford University study has just concluded that the White House's scrapping of the Transbus concept has played right into the hands of General Motors, who doesn't want an advanced bus design that would mean a reduction in car sales.....

THE TRANS-BAY TERMINAL in San Francisco, which houses an Amtrak ticket office as well as public bus lines, was the scene of a bombing at 6:35pm on May 4. A pipe bomb in an attache case went off, narrowly missing waiting bus passengers. An elderly man just 5 feet from the bomb miraculously received only a cut lip. There was apparently no known motive and no clues..... DUTCH COMMUTER TRAIN and the RHINE EXPRESS heading for Germany collided headon during the morning rush hours of May 4 in Rotterdam, killing 23 and injuring 5 people..... READER HENRY POSNER calls attention to our comment about a lot of people not celebrating the birth of ConRail (2nd Mar issue), and remarks "We did!" What happened was that 75 Princeton people rode the last run (under Penn Central) of the "Dinky" on the "PJ&B" (Princeton Junction and Back) line on Mar 31. There was free champagne on the 2.7 mile ride as the train departed at 11:45pm, and then returned at 12:13, now under the ConRail regime..... SPEAKING OF CONRAIL, all reports so far say that the new railroad is doing surprisingly well. Under the leadership of R. D. Spence, former head of SP operations, ConRail in its first month has drawn praise for steadily improving service and a good monetary position.....

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THE ADIRONDACK TRAIN is in trouble. The State of New York is not pleased with its rather low ridership, and is balking about continuing to pay its portion of the subsidies under section 403-B of the Amtrak Act. The state's contract expires on Aug 5, and while officials said they want to continue the train, they have to show justification in suitable ridership figures. If thetrain stops in early August, New York State riders will lose a rail route to the Montreal Olympics..... AMTRAK AGREED TO reinstate the FLORIDIAN stop at Waldo, FL, came a May 5 announcement, after University of Florida students gathered 1055 signatures on a petition. Students expressed surprise at their success and didn't think the reinstatement would come so soon or so easily. The service was dropped Apr 25, and will be resumed no later than June 15..... THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT of Transportation announced this month that train service will be restored to several of the state's cities. Altoona-Pittsburgh daylight service will be first, with a Harrisburg to Washington run later, that will run (on alternate days) thru Erie, Sunbury, Milton, Williamsport, and Lock Haven, Ridgway, St. Mary's, and Warren. At first the train will operate only Harrisburg-Erie, until track work can extend the line. These two trains are expected to run this year. RDC cars will be used on these routes in the fall, after serving on a special Philadelphia-Valley Forge Bicentennial route planned for this summer. The Harrisburg Evening News reported that later plans call for routes between Scranton and Philly, via Wilkes-Barre and Allentown; Reading-Allentown-Easton-New York; and Scranton-Mount Pocono-New York. The paper said that the federal DOT has instructed Amtrak not to enter into any more 403-B agreements with states, even tho Congress lawfully requires Amtrak to do so..... OREGON TRAIN SUPPORTERS are working for a hoped-for restoration of passenger service between Coos Bay (or North Bend) on the Oregon Coast and Eugene. Interested parties can contact Key Wells, The Right Track, Inc., Box 1193, Coos Bay, OR 97420..... THE TWO SECTIONS in which Auto-Train now operates (see p. 11) work this way: the auto carriers leave first (30-45mins before the passenger section). This operation began May 6. It allows more passengers to be handled, and cars are ready to drive away when the passengers arrive at their destination. Of course the slack problem with the auto carriers in the train is also eliminated... AMTRAK VISITORS TO Los Angeles will find that starting in late May that downtown Minibus 203 will stop at Union Station (7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10-4 Sat) and for a 10¢ fare take them to the RTD station where Greyhound and other buses stop.....
A FOURTH TRAIN on the SAN DIEGAN route, disapproved earlier by San Diego officials, has now regained approval, with the provision that no action be taken until the state legislature allocates $1.4 million for improvement of facilities.....
A NUMBER OF people are seeing RTN for the first time with this issue. We invite you to join us by subscribing today. Please see p. 22 for rates.....

THE THIRD DERAILMENT in Auto-Train's history came on May 5 when the northbound train from Florida left the SCL tracks near Jarratt, VA. Twenty-nine auto carriers derailed, 5 of them tipping over. The rest of the train was unaffected, and continued on to Lorton--23 passenger cars and 5 auto carriers. March 7 was the last derailment (see 2nd Mar issue), and the first the company suffered was in March, 1973, when the southbound train hit a lumber truck..... AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES for March, just released, show a continuing improvement in long distance travel totals. Long haul ridership was up 6% from March of last year. Short distance ridership was down 2%, and overall there was a small gain of about 2000 passengers, but so small that Amtrak called it "no change." COAST STARLIGHT ridership continued the highest in the system, with 75,551 passengers, tho it was down 6% from Mar 1975. Biggest improvement in long distance ridership was on the NATIONAL LIMITED and the FLORIDIAN, but up 16% from last year. On-time performance overall was 76.5% in March, up from 73.3 in Feb. In evaluating ridership figures, note that Easter season fell in March last year, but in April this year, and thus last year's figures are inflated by the occurrence of that short peak-season.....

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THE SOUTHBOUND FLORIDIAN on Apr 26 struck two automobiles at a busy boulevard crossing in Oakland Park, FL at 75mph. Witnesses said the crossing gates and warning lights did not start to operate until the train was in the crossing. One car was hit broadside and pushed into a canal, killing a young mother and her infant daughter. A second car was lifted into the air and spun around, and thrown against a crossing gate. The 50-year old woman driver was thrown from her car and injured. The train, apparently undamaged, stopped a half-mile away and backed up to the crash scene..... THE SUNSET LIMITED was clocked by RTN reader Herbert Cantelow at over 100mph on a section of newly laid welded rail somewhere between Deming NM and El Paso TX on Apr 19. He timed 4 successive milepost appearances at 20'36", 21'12", 21'47", and 22'23". The intervals for the 3 miles covered were thus 36", 35", and 36", which averages out to 100.9 mph, after which the train had to slow for a curve. Train 2 had a consist of the two usual SDP40Fs, one baggage, 3 hi-levels, lounge, diner, and 4 sleepers. Mr. Cantelow described the fast ride as smooth as silk..... THE ONLY WAY into Zermatt, Switzerland is by narrow gauge railway or on foot. The town has no automobiles, and voters overwhelmingly have prohibited their entrance..... AMTRAK'S RECENT PRACTICE of using oilcloth-covered mattresses and foam rubber pillows in sleeping cars is alarming us. We experienced the dual problems of sheets and blankets continually coming untucked, and of being too warm in bed on our recent trip to Washington, but we didn't know what was the cause until we began receiving letters with similar complaints. For example, reader Stanley Bristol suggests that contour sheets be used to prevent their pulling out. We strongly urge going back to the old system. We learned to tolerate Lexan on our last trip, but the oilcloth and foam rubber MUST go.....

PLEASE NOTE: CHANGE IN PUBLICATION DATE. This issue of RTN, originally scheduled to be mailed May 14, will actually be mailed May 18.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"If you've ever travelled across Canada by train on CN's SUPER CONTINENTAL or CP Rail's CANADIAN, you know how shoddy rail transportation in this country really is. Food is too expensive. Sleeping accommodations are cramped and uncomfortable. Day coaches are old and worn out. And the whole trip takes too long. If you're trapped in one of those rolling relics and want something to do to while away the time, why not write a letter of protest to your MP? It's the federal government you have to thank for providing us with one of the most outdated passenger systems in the industrialized world.".

--Manfred Tempelmayr in Victoria's Monday Magazine (B.C.) 4/19.

Urban-Suburban Transit

IF YOU COMMUTE an hour each way to work, you spend about 500 hours per year in your commute vehicle, or over a year of your life in 20 years, points out the Irvine Company in a Wall Street Journal ad. Which is preferable--to spend that year in a comfortable rail car or wasting it cramped behind the wheel of an automobile on a hazardous highway?

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S Mass Transportation Administration in April announced the selection of 5 cities to participate in the design of Auto Restricted Zone demonstrations in downtown areas. The cities are: Boston; Burlington, VT; Memphis; Providence, RI; and Tucson, AZ. Over 40 cities were interested in the idea of auto-free downtown zones, but UMTA chose these 5 as having highest potential, and will ultimately choose 2 or more of the 5 for Federal demonstration funding to help implement their plans.

RTN ERRED RECENTLY when it reported that all of Vancouver's E800 electric trolley coaches had been delivered. The final 10 of the 50-unit order will arrive soon. Delay was caused when the Manitoba builder shut down temporarily due to a shortage of funds. Flyer Industries plans to deliver about 25 coaches per month to San Francisco, down from an earlier projection of 40 per month. The firm has delivered its first E800 to Boston, equipped with a left-side door for operation thru the former streetcar-subway segment near Harvard University of Cambridge.

GREYHOUND'S "NONSTOP RUNWAY" New York-Philadelphia service was abandoned Feb. 1. It had provided nonstop service every 30 mins for a couple of months. Now nonstop service is less than hourly. Bus time is 2 hr 5 min, compared to 1 hr 15 min for Metroliner, or 1 hr 30 min to 1 hr 50 min for conventional trains.

BOEING-VERTOL HAS denied the rumor that it would default on its contract to construct streetcars for Boston and San Francisco. Boston papers have reported that the cars will cost $600,000 if there are re-orders. Present price is $288,000. One Boston publication outlined a multitude of problems with the equipment late last month. According to the paper, the cars were designed in "never-never land" by people who had never ridden the Boston subway. Production problems included union troubles, prompted by workers who had helped produce lunar modules and felt it beneath their dignity to work on streetcars. Recent redesign work (there were no prototypes before bidding) has cut the number of door parts from 1300 to 300.

SEATTLE'S NEWSPAPERS REPORTED May 7 that the city's Metro Transit system has refused delivery on 145 new AMG transit buses. The equipment is being stored at the AMG Indiana factory because Metro's noise-standards are exceeded by the buses. One Seattle paper reported that the equipment, purchased despite the "No New Diesels" pledge made prior to the enabling election, may never arrive in Seattle.

CITY OF DETROIT is bringing back its first streetcars in 20 years. A trial run of a small trolley purchased from Lisbon, Portugal occurred since our last issue. The car ran down a 300-foot temporary track with power from a generator delivered thru an extension cord (there was no catenary). Cars will begin runs on Washington Blvd. in June. Detroit's old streetcars were sold to Mexico City.

AFTER 38 DAYS without public municipal transportation, San Francisco saw the strike of city craft workers ending, and the Muni Railway, workers of which had walked out in sympathy, rolling again, on May 8. On a strange note, the city discovered that crime had decreased markedly during the transit walkout. The strike of Golden Gate Transit, serving Marin and Sonoma Counties from S.F., continues.

NEW YORK'S MTA will test "Cosmopolitan Cafe" cars for 30 days beginning May 18 on the 12:05pm train from Grand Central to New Haven. Cars will offer commuter lunches and bar service.

CHICAGO'S SOUTH SHORE line, owned by Chessie, said in April that it will spend $1 million to keep its fleet of 50-year-old interurbans running, but unless some agency coughs up money for new cars, it will petition the ICC to abandon runs.

CALL FOR TRAIN RATINGS!

A remimder to send in your ratings of trains ridden since Dec 15, 1975, for inclusion in our Third Reader Rating Survey. Trains ridden up to next June 15 may be included. Rating instructions are the same as in our last survey:

Rate each category on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely poor) thru 5 (average, acceptable) to 9 (extremely good). Categories are identified by letters A-K:

(A) overall quality of train service; (B) service from on-board train personnel, except food service personnel; (C) service from food & lounge personnel; (D) quality of food aboard; (E) condition of cars; (F) desirability of route followed; (G) quality of station services; (H) condition of track; (I) desirability of present scheduling; (J) train promotion & advertising; (K) desirability of types of equipment on train.

Include your comments as desired, and indicate if we can use your name. Send your ratings, separate from other correspondence, to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. We will publish results as soon as possible after June 15 cutoff date.

WHERE IS RTN'S RAIL TRAVEL YEARBOOK 1975?

A report to the reader:

Our first yearbook has obviously been delayed beyond its originally announced publication date. It will be out very soon. In the meantime, it has been growing in size and features, so you'll be getting more than you thought you would!

Thank you for your advance order! If you haven't ordered yet, and want to be assured of a copy of this very limited edition, send the coupon or a note to us, with remittance of $3.50 per copy (Calif. add tax of 21¢--or 23¢ in BART counties). Thank you!

RTN'S

RAIL TRAVEL YEARBOOK

1975

MESSAGE MEDIA
Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Send me ____ copy(ies) of RTN's Rail Travel Yearbook 1975 as soon as it's ready.
Amount enclosed: $ _____.

NAME . . . . . .

ADDRESS. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Express Ads

Dining car china dishes and glasses, 10 railroads. Stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kansas 67213.

"STEAMY" -- FOR YOUNG RAIL ENTHUSIASTS! "Steamy is a locomotive on the ex D & RGW narrow gauge, now the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. 28 pages to color plus an exciting story gives youngsters a feeling for Rocky Mountain Railroading as it was. $2.00. Dave Ulmer, 1407 Holmes Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80909.

WANTED: Back issues of the following magazines: RTN Vol. 1 issues 1-4, Vol. 2, issues 4,14, Vol. 3 issues 10,12, Vol. 4 issues 13-24. PACIFIC NEWS issues 1-33, 43. EVERYWHERE WEST issues 1-63, 70. CTC BOARD issues 1-72, 74-85, 88-89, 96-97, 100-101, 103-107, 114, 134. NARP NEWSLETTER Vols. 1-8 all issues, Vol. 9 issue 1. PTJ Vol. 1-2 all issues, Vol. 3 issues 1,4, Vol. 4 issues 1-3, Vol. 6 issue 3. SIGNALMANS JOURNAL Sept. 1974. J.A. Chambers, 20333 Roscoe Blvd, Canoga Park, CA 91306.

Detroit Jackson & Chicago, West Point, Missouri Pacific, Conductor, Bessemer & Pullman uniform buttons, 75¢ each. J. Lajoie, 22 Stevens, Methuen, Mass. 01844.

GREEN BAY & WESTERN Fan Trip - The Northstar Chapter NRHS will run a special one-time, two-day passenger excursion train on the GB&W. First day's trip will be from Winona, MN to Merrillan, WI 132 mile round trip. Second day Winona to Wisconsin Rapids, 237 mile round trip. Saturday's fare $20. Children's fare $12.50 (Saturday only). Sunday's fare $32.50 per seat. Two-day special discount fare $45.50. All fares increase by $5 after May 20, 1976. Box lunch available both days $3 each. For tickets, flyer and additional information, write to: Trip Director, Northstar Chapter NRHS, P. O. Box 16478, St. Paul, MN 55116.

RR pocket watches for sale. Fine condition. Send SASE for list. We also buy. What do you have? Bill Turner, P.O. Box 3095, Hamilton, Ohio 45013.

STEAM IN BRITAIN - MAY 30 to JUNE 13 - From San Francisco, escorted by Barry Garland, President of Sacramento Valley Live Steamers. Visit and ride many unique steam rail lines still in service. Meet with British Rail clubs. Tour designed especially for the steam rail enthusiasts. First class hotels, many meals included. Visit London, Hastings, Rye, Leeds, York, Chester, Wales, Stratford, Warwick and Coventry. Cost is $1295 per person, sharing double. Small group with a few openings. If interested call immediately for brochure. Patterson Travel Agency, 855 Howe Avenue, Sacramento, California 95825. Phone (916) 929-3373.

TIMETABLE DEPARTMENT STORE, 21 E. Robin Rd., Holland PA 18966. We buy singles & collections, Pay Big. Try us first. We sell Fantastic Timetable Grab Bags $8.00 a real bargain. Famous Coval Covers for Publi Timetables - clear plastic - great 100 for $6.75, sample free. We are Antique Ti card Acquisitors, a Clover & Coval enterprise.

One way to keep up-to-date on European railway ne is reading the TICKER TAPE -- a new and rather different monthly newsletter. You should try it! We'll send it to you free of charge for the next three months. Just write a postcard and send it to Ticker Tape, Box 1092, DK-8200 Arhus N, Denmark

PASSENGER CAR ROSTERS for your favorite R.R. Much dat GN, SOU, B&O, AT&SF, SP, NYNH&H, MKT, C&O, D&RGW, KCS, IC, StL&SF, T&P, L&N, and N&W rosters are $2.00 each, all others $3.00 each. All postpaid. Ralph Frede icks, 1508 W. 41st St., LaGrange, Ill. 60525.

CUSTOM AMTRAK BUTTONS -- Special large 3" buttons, with "Wh not Madison??" or "People Come First" or "The Turbos are Coming!!", each with rge Amtrak logo below. $1 each, or 4 for $3, any Mix, Julie Kreunen, 305 Yosem e Tr, Madison, Wisc. 53705.

Note: at time of this scan (NOV. 2021) both copies available had this same printing flaw.

PHOTO GALLERY

(Top of p. 23:) A view from the street of Rhode Island Avenue station on the new Washington Metro system as it began operation. From a color slide by Ken Maylath. (Middle of page:) For its 5th Anniversary, Amtrak released this photo of one of its first cars to be painted in Amtrak colors, five years ago. No car identification was available. (Bottom of page:) Engine 4449 hauls the AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN at 50mph on Santa Fe track ten miles south of San Antonio, NM (south of Socorro, NM) last Feb 6, bound for El Paso and Odessa, TX. From a color print by Robert Clark.

STEAM TRAIN SPECIAL TO AUSTRALIA

Departing October 31 by Qantas Airways from Vancouver and San Francisco to Sydney.

A 24-day steam train adventure, visiting every working railroad museum and steam railway between Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide.

All transportation within Australia by rail, even in Tasmania. First class hotels throughout.

See the amazing accomplishments of Australia's rail clubs in resurrecting and perpetuating the glory of steam for tourist attractions--a railroad photographer's dream!

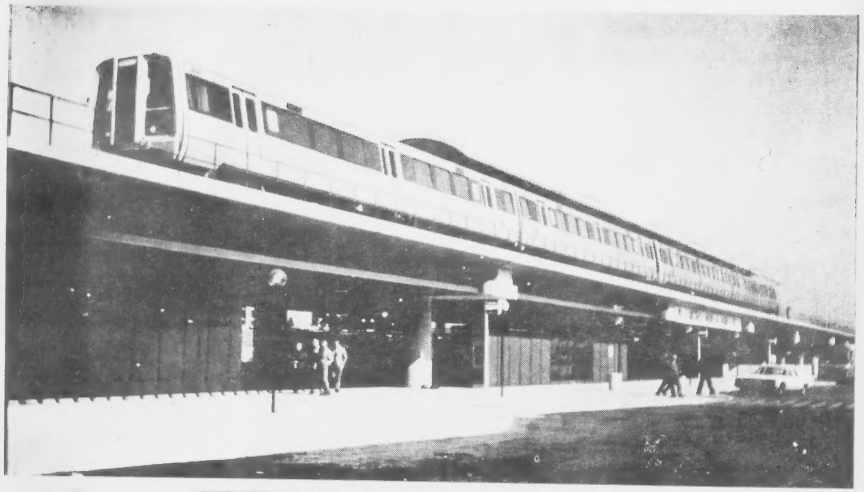
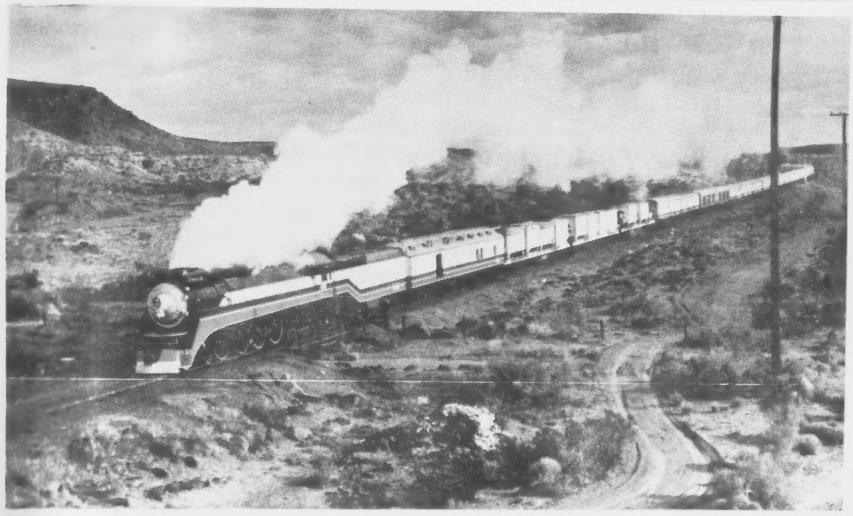
Cost from West Coast: $1653.00 per person, U.S. funds, double occupancy.
Single hotel rooms: $125.00 additional.

Detailed itinerary available from:

SKYLINE TRAVEL SERVICE
563 Granville Street
Vancouver B.C.
V6C 1X6

Phone (604) 685-6102

A NOTE OF THANKS! The volume of sales for the USA RAIL PASS has amazed us. Our thanks to each of you who purchased your Pass and secured reservations through our office. We wish you a pleasant trip, and look forward to your continued business. Dick Reynolds, Chuck Vercelli, Dave Butts, Henry Luna. GREAT WESTERN TOURS.

THE POSTAL SERVICE takes a good portion of your subscription payment for Rail Travel News--but then that's what subscribers have insisted on: first class delivery of current passenger train news. Your $9 subscription for 24 issues (37.5¢ per issue) breaks down this way: 13¢ to the Postal Service (34.7%) for mailing; 24.5¢ (65.3%) for all other costs. Help support RTN and the Postal Service by subscribing now: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads (camera-ready copy) $25 per half-page (maximum size--4x5 ins.), $12.50 quarter page. Write: MESSAGE MEDIA - RTN, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Thank you!